

CONTRASTING LOVES

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"FOR I AM NOW READY TO BE OFFERED, AND THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE IS AT HAND. I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH: HENCEFORTH, THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, SHALL GIVE ME AT THAT DAY: AND NOT TO ME ONLY, BUT UNTO ALL THEM ALSO THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING. DO THY DILIGENCE TO COME SHORTLY UNTO ME: FOR DEMAS HATH FORSAKEN ME, HAVING LOVED THIS PRESENT WORLD, AND IS DEPARTED UNTO THESSALONICA: CRESCENS TO GALATIA, TITUS UNTO DALMATIA" - II Timothy 4:6-10.

We have quite a contrast in verses eight and ten. Paul said after a life of fighting, a life of faith, a lifetime of running the race..."I know that there is a crown laid up for me." God gave him this assurance before he was ready to lay his head down for the Lord. I think that the Lord will make others, like Paul, know that they too will have a crown. What a thrill to have the assurance that you have fought a good fight and have finished the course! Then it would be a thrill to die, wouldn't it? Paul was going to his execution with a wonderful hope filling his heart. This happened to other martyrs of the early Church, also. They were glad to give their lives, and were happy in doing it. The promise of the crown was not to Paul only, but to all them that love His appearing. This seems to be the requirement of winning, to regard Christ's appearing as the most wonderful event that could ever happen. This is the same love that is used of God's love for the sinner. It is a love that does not change; and I believe that, when God puts this hope in our hearts, we can regard that as the most wonderful event that will ever happen to us in this world. Glory to God! It was to Paul. Think of what it meant to him. He and others were looking for the coming of the Lord in that day, because that hope was shining brightly in their hearts. It did not matter that they lived in the first century.

We have quite a contrast between loving the appearing of the Lord and loving the world. What does it mean to love His appearing?

First, it means that we will be READY for Him. The Lord Himself said in Matthew 24:44 "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." Readiness for the coming of the Lord gives us a thrill. If we are not ready yet, we do not have that thrill. Instead, we have sort of an urgency that tells us, "Now get ready. You know you must be ready for the coming of the Lord." The sound of the trumpet will put a thrill in our hearts. It will be wonderful to see the Lord face to face. I do not think any of us like this life so much that we want to stay here indefinitely. Some people say, "I want the Lord to wait just a little while longer, until I can do this or that." We do not want to put anything before His coming, do we?

Another thing which will show that we love His appearing is that we will be FAITHFUL stewards. We will be faithful to what He has given us to do. There is a parable in Luke nineteen. Where we read: "And he called ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come." This is very important. We have the wrong attitude if we think, "Perhaps He is coming today, or maybe tomorrow; so I will just sit here in my rocking chair and I will not do a thing. If I do, I might do something wrong. I

might fail the Lord. So I will not move an inch for fear I do." Jesus said, "Occupy till I come." The thing is to be faithful to Him while we are here, and do what He has given us to do. God gives us our responsibilities, and we are to assume that which He has given us to do.

Another parable is written, in Matthew twenty-five, about talents that were given to those of different abilities. One person had five talents, another two, and another only one. The person who had just the one talent thought, "I do not have very much, so why should I be faithful?" We find that, when the Lord came back, that one was called a "wicked and slothful servant." We learn from this that in whatever way God wants us to be faithful, let us be faithful. We will be rewarded for it. People say of someone, "It is a shame that he does not have more to do." If God wanted him to do more, He would give him more to do. We so often try to tell God what to do, and try to dictate to Him how a thing should be done. We expect God to come across, using our own ideas. God is not persuaded by anyone. He will not change His mind for anyone's cry. He does exactly what He wants to do. We should pray according to His will. We should be glad that sometimes He does not let us do the things that we want to do.

Someone says, "All I do is just go and sit in the meeting." That is all right. Be faithful in your sitting. What would happen if the hen was not faithful when she sets on the eggs? She would not have any fruit, would she? What does she do? She just sits on the nest. In due time, she bears fruit. We can sit in a meeting, and have fruit for the Lord and glorify Him. If you only have that talent Good! Paul says, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord." If you want to do more than sit in the meeting, you can clean the building. We should never say that we do not have anything to do for the Lord. We can visit the sick, or the poor, or the lonely. We can send out cards. We can read to the blind. We can be faithful and use our ability, no matter how little it may be.

Another sign that we love His appearing is to be PATIENT in waiting for the Lord. Paul told the Corinthians, "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" --I Cor. 1:7. Exercising the gifts that God has given us and appropriating the grace that goes along with those gifts, we wait for the coming of the Lord. We wonder, "When will He come? Why won't He come now?" We are to wait patiently for the coming of the Lord. We can occupy while we are waiting.

OBEDIENCE is another thing that will cause us to be ready when Jesus comes. Paul told Timothy ... "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" - I Tim. 6:14. Now the commandment that Paul gave to Timothy was to be faithful and beware of those that did not follow the Lord.

He also told Timothy to flee the things that were not right "the love of money" being one, and also covetousness. He was to "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness," and to "fight the good fight of faith," - I Tim. 6:10-12.

We need to review what Paul tells us in his Gospel, and try to live according to the Gospel that was handed down to Timothy. Sometimes it seems like we are barely holding on until Jesus comes. Well, that is all right. Let us grip tighter. Paul instructs us, "Having done all to stand." We want to be faithful, and do what God has told us in the Scriptures. Is it really profitable? Paul could have wondered about that many times. He could have

thought, "Why did the Lord pick me out from everybody else, and bestow this wonderful revelation and then let me suffer?" We would like to have the revelations without the sufferings. We would like to have the wonderful glory of the Gospel without the persecutions and the reproach.

Paul besought the Lord three definite times to remove the things that were bothering him. Oh, I am sure he cried out to the Lord to remove that thorn in the flesh. He may have used this reasoning as a leverage with the Lord: "I can do so much for You, if You will just deliver me." But the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Sometimes the Lord's hands are tied from delivering us, because His will is more important. It was in Paul's case. And why is Paul so unique? He is our leader, and he has led the way. We are to follow him as he followed Christ. Sometimes, God does not come across for us, because it is not for our good. All things work together for our good. We must take all these things, and be obedient to Him.

Then another sign that we love His appearing is to ABIDE in the Lord. This will give us a love for His appearing. As John says ... "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" - I John 2:28. We abide in Him now; and then, when He appears, we will have confidence. We will not be ashamed. We will not say, "Oh, I could have yielded my life to You, but I did not. I could have been faithful. I could have been obedient to You many times when I was not." That is what would make us ashamed at His coming. Oh, how we will lose if we do not yield to the Lord now. It may seem that there is plenty of time to do those things that our flesh desires to do. When the Lord comes we will not have any more opportunities to yield to Him. We will either be ashamed or confident, when He appears.

"Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Demas labored with Paul, and was with him when he wrote to the Colossians. Another time Paul called Demas his co-worker. But now he had to say, "Demas hath forsaken me." The reason, of course, was that he loved this present world. It was more important to him than the Gospel. It was more important to him than the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He loved the world; and therefore, it was precious to him. Demas loved the world, just as much as Paul loved the coming of the Lord. His name means "popular" or "of the people." Here we have a little hint of his trouble. He had too many bouquets thrown his way. He had too many flattering remarks said about him. He had too much applause. He had so many people after him that he became lifted up. Many Christian workers have been ruined, also their testimony and their ministry, because they were too popular. They became too big. God used their ministry and did many wonderful things through them, but they became proud and high minded. It seems that people must applaud a personality. It would be much better for them to praise the Lord. There is too much man-worship today. The personality is the thing. It is a snare to be popular. That is why God does not let us be popular with the world. But Demas was, and he thought it was pretty nice. When a group of people see a celebrity they are all aghast, and say, "Oh, there he is!" If Jesus would come to the earth as He was when He lived here, I wonder how many people would even recognize Him. One of these days, we

are going to see Jesus Christ. He is the most popular One in our hearts. We love Him.

Poor Demas, he was too popular. He loved this present world. You would almost think that John knew Demas. He knew others like him, for he wrote, "Love not the world,

neither the things that are in the world." That hits home, doesn't it? Oh, there are a lot of things that we like real well. We say we need them because they are necessary. We like good cars, we like nice homes, we like good food, we like all these things; but we surely cannot love them, can we? "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." What does that mean? Do not put them ahead of the Lord. Do not treasure them more than we do the Word, or the Meeting, or the fellowship of God's people. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" - I John 2:15. Demas loved the world. How could he love the things of the world more than God?

I think Demas wanted a name for himself. He probably thought that he could be another Apostle Paul, but without the suffering. He was going to preach, and he was going to show Paul how to do it. He would compromise a little bit get in with the public officials, and then they would not bother him so much. Maybe he had a public relations man that went before him to make things ready. Paul was content to be popular with the Lord.

We do not love the world ... "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The love of the world is summed up in these three different guises. "The world passed away, and the lust thereof." Everything in this world will pass away. Everything we own will pass away. We are not going to take any of our possessions to Heaven. How important are they? They are to be used only for the glory of God. We cannot depend upon anything in this world. "But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever"I John 2:16,17.

When Paul was ready to lay down his life, he knew there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give him at that day. Paul looked forward to that day. As he looked back over his Christian life, he could say, "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed" - II Tim. 1:12. He was not ashamed of his sufferings, nor of his prison cell. If anybody had any reason to look back and regret his life, it was the Apostle Paul; that is, if we look at it from a natural standpoint. He could have been a part of the Sanhedrin. Instead, he was alone, suffering physically, in the dim cold prison cell. God loved him, but it did not look like it. I am sure the Lord would have gladly delivered Paul out of that prison. He would gladly have given him a perfect body; but it would not have been good for him. He had to treat Paul that way. This was Paul's conclusion, "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh" - II Cor 12:7. This was a "messenger of Satan." Job had one, too. We have messengers of Satan. They knock on our doors, or ring up the telephone. Sometimes they whisper in our ears. God has deliberately given them to us to keep us humble. In many things, God's hands are tied. He could deliver us, but He wants something better for us.

Paul said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" - II Timothy 1:12. Paul committed his life and ministry to Christ against the day of His coming. He will keep us, too, if we commit our lives to Him and everything we own. If we trust in God, He will see to it that we go the way He wants us to go. If we give our lives to Him as Paul did, we will be assured that He will bring us out all right. Then we, too, can say, "Henceforth there is laid up

for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day" II Timothy 4:8.

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